



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Eighty percent of state dairies implement water quality plans by deadline

Olympia – Eighty percent of the state's 599 licensed dairy farms met a Dec. 31, 2003 deadline imposed by the state legislature to implement nutrient management plans to protect surface and groundwater, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) announced today.

"We are pleased with the hard work of those dairies that have implemented plans," Valoria Loveland, WSDA director, stated. "We are working with the remaining dairies to get them into compliance. Plan implementation is important to protect local water quality."

Of the 20 percent not meeting the deadline, 4 percent are new dairies with later deadlines, and 11 percent have applied for an extension, said Nora Mena, program manager for the WSDA Livestock Nutrient Management Program.

Notices have been sent to farms that are late implementing their dairy waste plans. Mena said farms that didn't implement plans by the end of January will be fined \$100 a month until they comply.

Legislation imposing the 2003 deadline is contained in the state's Dairy Nutrient Management Act passed in 1998. New dairies have deadlines beyond the end of 2003. The basic intent of the Dairy Nutrient Management Act is to prevent the discharge of contaminated water or manure into streams, drainage ditches, surface water, and groundwater, and to ensure that manure or water from manure lagoons are applied to crops and pastures at proper times and rates.

To achieve this goal, farms must develop and implement plans covering containment, collection, storage, transfer, treatment, and use of dairy waste.

Mena emphasized that dairy waste is a valuable source of crop nutrients. "Good nutrient management not only protects water quality but can save operations money and resources spent on commercial fertilizers," she said.

The state's conservation districts provide technical assistance to dairies and also approve nutrient management plans. Dairy operators must certify that they are carrying out the plans.

MORE

Dairy program compliance– 2 of 2
Feb. 2, 2004

WSDA periodically inspects dairy farms for compliance with state law. WSDA's mission is to support the agricultural community and protect consumers and the environment. "We seek to balance effective regulations and compliance, with good education and access of all livestock operators to technical and financial assistance," Mena stated.

Responsibility for the dairy and livestock program was transferred by the legislature from the state Department of Ecology to WSDA in July 2003. A committee consisting of representatives from the livestock industry, WSDA, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Ecology, and others advises WSDA on dairy and other livestock nutrient management programs.

Persons with questions on WSDA's program may contact Mena by phone at (360) 902-2894, or by e-mail at nmena@agr.wa.gov.

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